DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 387 PS 023 282

TITLE	Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs.
INSTITUTION	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC. Head Start Bureau.
REPORT NO	ACYF-IM-91-03
PUB DATE	5 Mar 91
NOTE	24p.
PUB TYPE	Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Role; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Background; *Cultural Pluralism; *Educational Principles; *Multicultural Education; Preschool Curriculum; *Preschool Education; Relevance (Education)
IDENTIFIERS	*Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

This report outlines 10 multicultural principles for Head Start preschool programs and ancillary services. It asserts that Head Start programming should: (1) treat every child as an individual; (2) represent the cultural groups in the community; (3) emphasize accurate information about cultural groups and discard stereotypes; (4) address cultural relevance in making curriculum choices; (5) allow individuals to retain their cultural identity; (6) provide for native language instruction and the acquisition of English for children with limited English ability; (7) have staff that reflect the culture of the community and families served; (8) allow children to develop respect for and understanding of other cultures; (9) examine and challenge institutional and personal biases; and (10) ensure that culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all components and services. (MDM)

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Administration for Children, Youth and Families

1. Log No. ACYF-IM-91-03	2. Issuance Date: 3/5/91
3. Originating Office: Head Start Bureau	
4. Key Word: Multicultural Principles	5.
6.	7.

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO : Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT : Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs

INFORMATION: Attached is a document, "Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs," for your consideration and use. The principles detailed in the document are the result of two years of effort by our Head Start Multicultural Task Force, a group of people chosen from the former network of grantees who provided training on the four multicultural curricula developed by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) as part of the Strategy for Spanish Speaking Children in the 1970s. The Task Force was convened to consider the current needs of grantees who are serving very diverse populations in many parts of the country. The Task Force developed the principles which have been reviewed and expanded by Regional and national staff and experts in the field of multicultural programming. These principles now stand as a challenge to Head Start grantees and delegate agencies to focus efforts on individualizing services so that every child and family feels respected and valued and is able to grow in accepting and appreciating differences.

These principles go beyond what takes place in a Head Start classroom. They apply to all component services, to children with special needs, and to the administration of the program. They form the foundation of our joint efforts to help both the families we serve and the staff we employ to make every effort to understand and respect our differences.

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ACYF has recently funded six Head Start grantees to be demonstration sites for the infusion of these multicultural principles through all aspects of their programs and to document the process by which this is achieved. Next fall these grantees will share their experiences with staff of other programs and explain what they are doing.

We are also developing a library of resources for your use in providing training and technical assistance. Many of these resources, which should be available for fiscal year 1992, have been developed by Head Start grantees through discretionary and innovative grant funds.

I strongly recommend that each Head Start Director schedule time to review and discuss the principles with all of the component coordinators as a group, since the issue of multicultural programming impinges on all of the Head Start components and their services.

Wade F. Horn, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Attachment

cc: Regional Administrators, OHDS
Regions I-X

MULTICULTURAL PRINCIPLES FOR HEAD START PROGRAMS

Effective Head Start programming requires understanding, respect, and responsiveness to the cultures of all people but particularly to those of enrolled children and families. Since its inception in 1965, Head Start has recognized the importance of nurturing the self-esteem of each child and family in the program. The Head Start Program Performance Standards stress the importance of enhancing the sense of dignity and self-worth of each child and his/her family. Head Start grantees seek to develop approaches which support this humanizing goal. Children and their families come to Head Start rooted in a culture which gives them meaning and direction. The same statement is true of the staff and administrators who work in Head Start programs. This culture is a set of rules that governs their "world," organizes their physical and social interactions, and shapes their understanding and perceptions of behavior and ideas. This world is a milieu, a context, in which people actively live, develop, and interact. Head Start staff need to be helped to understand culture as functioning through their own basic core beliefs and values. Because the child's culture and family provide the foundation upon which the child's social competence is developed, Head Start staff must be sensitive to the role culture plays in child development.

Our hope is for each Head Start child to become a world citizen through multicultural programming. For each parent and

staff member to grow is also our goal. The Head Start program goals are the foundation for this set of principles. These principles have been developed to guide Head Start grantees in meeting these goals.

> Section 1304.1-3 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards (45 CFR-1304) states:
>
> (a) The Head Start Program is based on the premise that all children share certain needs, and that children of low-income families, in particular, can benefit from a comprehensive developmental program to meet those needs. The Head Start Program approach is based on the philosophy that:
>
> > (1) A child can benefit most from a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program to foster development and remedy problems as expressed in a broad range of services, and that
> >
> > (2) The child's entire family, as well as the community, must be involved. The program should maximize the strengths and unique experiences of each child. The family, which is perceived as the principal influence on the child's development, must be a direct participant in the program. Local communities are allowed latitude in developing creative program designs so long as the basic goals, objectives, and standards of a comprehensive program are adhered to.
>
> (b) The overall goal of the Head Start program is to bring about a greater degree of social competence in children of low-income families. By social competence is meant the child's everyday effectiveness in dealing with both present environment and later responsibilities in school and life. Social competence takes into account the inter-relatedness of cognitive and intellectual development, physical and mental health, nutritional needs, and other factors that

enable a developmental approach to helping children achieve social competence. To the accomplishment of this goal, Head Start objectives and performance standards provide for:

> (1) The improvement of the child's health and physical abilities, including appropriate steps to correct present physical and mental problems, and to enhance every child's access to an adequate diet. The improvement of the family's attitude toward future health care and physical abilities.
>
> (2) The encouragement of self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline which will assist in the development of the child's social and emotional health.
>
> (3) The enhancement of the child's mental processes and skills with particular attention to conceptual and communications skills.
>
> (4) The establishment of patterns and high expectations for success in the child which will create a climate of confidence for present and future learning efforts and overall development.
>
> (5) An increase in the ability of the child and the family to relate to each other and to others.
>
> (6) The enhancement of the sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and his family.

As the entire Head Start community implements these principles in policies, procedures, and practices, the development of social competence in children will be supported while the critical role of the family will be acknowledged,

reinforced, and enhanced. As a result, the child, the family, and the Head Start staff become participants in a larger community. Multicultural or culturally diverse programming celebrates individual differences. The cultural, racial, and ethnic composition of the Head Start community are becoming increasingly diverse as Head Start reflects the demographic changes in America. To be successful the Head Start community must understand and commit to appropriate multicultural programming which builds upon each child's culture and helps the child accept the many differences among individuals and eventually deal effectively with other cultures. Children enrolling in Head Start now will interact in the future, if not today, with others unlike themselves in this diverse society.

Head Start grantees must address issues of cultural relevance and diversity if they are to help children achieve social competence and reach their full potential. Cultural relevance supports each child's background as an integral part of the child. Since children are part of all who care for them, the significant people in their lives must be respected and nurtured by all who work with cultural issues. Culturally relevant programming in all Head Start components and services incorporates approaches that validate and build upon the culture and strengths of the enrolled children and their families. Such efforts require that policies, practices, and personal philosophies be examined for bias. This examination process is continuous and central to program development and evaluation.

The following principles form the framework for multicultural programming. They can serve as steps or structure by which participants can examine the task and develop strategies with which they personally and organizationally can reach the goal of helping children reach their full potential.

PRINCIPLES SUPPORTING THE FRAMEWORK

1. **Every individual is rooted in culture.**
2. **The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary sources for culturally relevant programming.**
3. **Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the culture of different groups and discarding stereotypes.**
4. **Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.**
5. **Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity**

while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.

6. Effective programs for children with limited English speaking ability require continued development of the primary language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.
7. Culturally relevant programming requires staff who reflect the community and families served.
8. Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences. It is beneficial to all children.
9. Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.
10. Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all components and services.

DISCUSSION

1. EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS ROOTED IN A CULTURE

Culture is everything that contributes to the life of a group of people, from the objects in their daily experiences to their customs and beliefs. It is a set of rules which govern the group's and the individual's experiences of the world and (sometimes unconsciously) provides the reason for their actions and behavior. It affects how ideas are perceived and what is valued and devalued.

Since culture is rooted in people's emotional commitments and guides their moral and aesthetic systems, it surfaces as attitudes and actions of "the right way" and "the wrong way." It is above all about valued relationships, about what is a worthy person and about how things are made valuable. It gives life meaning.

Everyone has a culture and each person is affected by its rules. Culture may often seem invisible while operating within it with persons who share the same cultural perspectives. This shared view is a centric one, relative to the group supporting it, and to the people in each group, their own culture will be the valid one. But each culture is only one set of possible choices, and although assuming that one's own culture is the valid one is natural, it is a form of

arrogance that is not effective in a world dealing with diversity.

Culture becomes most apparent when the individual leaves it, breaks its "rules," or when two cultures come into contact. Studying other cultures, other ways of handling common needs and ideas, is helpful for developing a perspective of tolerance. Culture is not the quaint ways of someone else--it is also your own "quaint" way.

Though culture is passed on from generation to generation, it is dynamic and evolves and adapts to the contemporary environment. Culture is acquired through the daily process of living, and in some aspects is formally taught. It is embedded in all institutions of our society, and certainly in our educational systems.

Families must be supported in their cultural identity in order to foster it in their children. The home language is the key to this identity. Culture affects a child's learning style, values, and self-concept. In order to develop positive self-esteem, children need to be recognized as valued individuals. Head Start, in its goal of bringing about a greater degree of social competence in children, ensures the recognition, value,

and respect of all cultural backgrounds. Successful programs for children respect and incorporate the child's contemporary culture. Children must not be expected to sacrifice their own cultural identity, but rather to take pride in themselves, their families, and their culture. Cultural identity should not restrict individual growth, development, and success; the task of an individual is not to have to "fit into" a culture but to use the cultural context as a vehicle to reach full potential.

2. THE CULTURAL GROUPS REPRESENTED IN THE COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES OF THE HEAD START PROGRAM ARE THE PRIMARY SOURCE FOR CULTURALLY RELEVANT PROGRAMMING.

The cultural groups represented by the families and the community served by Head Start are the primary source for culturally relevant information, which should be incorporated into all aspects of the program. Parents and community members must be involved in collecting accurate information about the community and its needs. Such culturally diverse programming idealizes and builds upon that which is most familiar to each child and valued by significant others in his/her life, namely aspects of that family's own culture. In doing so, learning is enhanced, and the learning extends more fully to include the home environment.

Grantees in their community-needs-assessment and planning process must assure that issues relevant to all cultural/ethnic groups in the low-income community are considered in determining which children/families are most in need of Head Start services. The absence of language-proficient staff is unacceptable as a reason for failing to serve significant ethnic/cultural groups in a community.

3. CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND DIVERSE PROGRAMMING REQUIRES LEARNING ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CULTURE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS AND DISCARDING CULTURAL STEREOTYPES.

Stereotypes and misinformation about cultures of different groups interfere with growth, communication, and respect. Stereotypes are learned; they are perceived and nourished by ignorance, lack of information, and interaction. Culture can influence values, perceptions, and behaviors. Minority groups also may share stereotypes that can affect perception of themselves and of other groups.

Individuals at every level of program operation should make a commitment to improve their program by acquiring accurate information about cultural groups, by examining institutional and personal biases, and by discarding stereotypes and misinformation. Accurate information about different cultural groups can be obtained from many sources:

- o Talking directly with a variety of individuals from that cultural group.
- o Reading books written by individuals within cultural groups. It is essential to keep in mind that individual differences exist within cultures and, therefore, care must be taken not to stereotype everyone within a particular culture based on information obtained from one source.
- o Viewing audiovisual materials
- o Utilizing any other resources acceptable to the group.

4. ADDRESSING CULTURAL RELEVANCE IN MAKING CURRICULUM CHOICES IS A NECESSARY, DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE.

Children will be more open to learning when their culture is respected and reflected within all aspects of the Head Start program. Acquiring new skills should not be a separate process from cultural programming. Children will learn about their culture as they progress in all the other aspects of development. Cultural relevance can enrich activities designed to facilitate children's communication, language development, and creativity as well as their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. In order to accommodate the various learning styles among children, teaching staff must set up the environment to

include many opportunities for "hands-on," concrete experiences. In this way children who learn by imitation, listening, and trial-and-error methods will find opportunity for "solo" learning without undue stress with verbal feedback to the teacher. Thus, a rich environment offering many choices and adequate time for exploration will meet children's needs. Children have to figure out what is meant in a given situation, while at the same time, staff can observe children in small groups and fine tune their own teaching styles. Training for teaching staff needs to focus on the match between the way children learn and the way they can be taught.

5. EVERY INDIVIDUAL HAS THE RIGHT TO MAINTAIN HIS/HER OWN IDENTITY WHILE ACQUIRING THE SKILLS REQUIRED TO FUNCTION IN THE LARGER SOCIETY.

In this way each person's development is enhanced; new skills required to cope with diversity are learned more readily. A program which recognizes and honors the child's and family's cultural identity contributes greatly to a child's self-esteem and to the development of a clear and positive personal and social identity. This in turn contributes to the child's learning and to his/her capacity to fully engage the world. This approach provides an opportunity for children to explore their own cultural uniqueness in a safe,

non-threatening manner. All children have the right to develop skills which allow them to respond to negative events in an active and effective manner. Children need to learn all the skills necessary to function effectively in a diverse society. Ultimately, children have the right to grow up in a society where differences exist, can be maintained, and are respected.

6. EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN WITH LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY REQUIRE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE WHILE THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH IS FACILITATED.

Children whose primary language is not English may need special attention. Children acquire a first or primary language from their families and the people who care for them. Language acquisition is a natural process based on discovering meanings perceived in conversation and facilitated by significant adults. Learning in the preschool years is best facilitated through the primary language. Staff who speak the language of the child can promote the development of the primary language most effectively. At the same time, recognizing the need for the child to become proficient in English, the acquisition of English language skills can be initiated. An effective and appropriate manner is by a natural approach rather than by formal instruction.

Research indicates that developing and maintaining a child's primary language supports and facilitates the learning of the second language. It is best accomplished without translation and with the recognition of the need to develop understanding before speaking. Staff and parents should be aware of these findings and build upon first language skills. Therefore,

- Staff and program resource people must reflect the language of the families being served;
- Parents sometimes need to be helped to understand the value of the primary language as a foundation for second language acquisition;
- Staff should be trained in techniques for second language acquisition, i.e, gestures, pointing, modeling, and other ways to help the child figure out the meaning without translation;
- The child whose home language is other than English must be viewed as fortunate since having more than one language is an asset in today's world.
- Any process of child assessment must be conducted in the child's primary language.
- When any child is evaluated to determine whether there is a disability, an assessment must be conducted in the child's primary language.

- o Staff should examine their own biases toward regional variations of language and dialects used by the children and recognize the children's primary language as an equally valid way of communication;
- o It is valuable for children whose primary language is English to learn a second language. For example, one out of every five job opportunities currently available requires the skill of speaking a second language. A substantial number of the world's children today are raised bilingually because their societies recognize that communication among nations is critical for their economic and political survival.

7. MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMMING REQUIRES STAFF WHO REFLECT THE COMMUNITY AND FAMILIES SERVED.

Head Start Program Performance Standards for the Education Services Component require grantees to have staff and program resources reflective of the racial and ethnic population of the children in the program (1304.2-2[c][2]).

Grantees must make efforts to extend this principle to all components and services. These staffing priorities also must be reflected in the delivery of health, nutrition, mental health, parent involvement, social service, and mainstreaming services, as well as at all

levels of the administration of the program. The "quality" aspect of the program need not be compromised in order to implement this principle. By incorporating cultural relevancy and providing staff who speak the primary language of enrolled children and families, the foundation is laid for a good Head Start Program. Individualized staff development, support services, effective recruiting, staff utilization, and a pertinent in-service training plan are required in order to fully incorporate this principle and maintain a program of overall excellence and quality. Ways to increase culturally/ethnically-relevant staff include:

- o Establish a training program which recruits, trains, and provides slots for relevant staff in all components and services.
- o Plan for program expansion well in advance to provide an opportunity to accomplish this.
- o Consider JTPA, JOBS, and the CDA Scholarship Assistance Program as additional resources.
- o Discuss the feasibility of sponsoring joint training with such organizations as local schools, welfare and health agencies.

8. MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN ENABLES CHILDREN TO DEVELOP AN AWARENESS OF, RESPECT FOR, AND APPRECIATION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND IT IS BENEFICIAL TO ALL CHILDREN.

Very concrete experiences, celebrating individual differences, contribute to children's natural understanding, acceptance, and respect for others who look different from themselves. Diversity within each classroom and home-based socialization sessions can be the starting point for discussions and activities about individual differences. Emphasis on what is happening with the children themselves facilitates the beginning of understanding and acceptance of differences and contributes to the development of social competence in Head Start children.

Young children's misconceptions about people may be based on their own limited experience and what they see modeled by the adults around them. Therefore, in order "to teach young children to overcome any inappropriate responses or behaviors triggered by cultural differences," adults must intervene appropriately and immediately, problem solve with children, and honestly answer questions regarding diversity.[1]

It is essential that multicultural activities to enable children to learn more about other cultures and people be delivered in an appropriate manner. Contemporary cultures should be integrated into the everyday environment activities, rather than teaching cultures

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1. Derman-Sparks, Louise, Anti-Bias Curriculum, NAEYC, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 57.

as a separate once-a-week or once-a-year activity. This type of approach, the "tourist approach,"[2] trivializes cultures and other people and may promote stereotypes by focusing only on obvious artifacts, traditions, and celebrations which often lock people in the past and to a particular country. Children who have encountered this type of approach have gained little information about differences within cultures and about people and their contemporary cultures in the United States, and in later years will not have skills to deal with bias and institutional "isms" (i.e., racism, classicism, disabilitism).

Our goal is to develop capacities in children to help them communicate adaptively with people who are culturally different and to enrich the children's lives through active engagement with the persons and works of other cultures.

9. CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND DIVERSE PROGRAMMING EXAMINES AND CHALLENGES INSTITUTIONAL AND PERSONAL BIASES. Institutional and personal biases are values or practices which favor one group or culture, by race, sex, income, physical attributes, or age. Institutional biases are reflected in practices and behaviors of the dominant group which devalue minority

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2. Derman-Sparks, Louise, Anti-Bias Curriculum, NAEYC, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 57.

groups and cultures. Institutional biases can be reflected in program design. Community needs assessment, child assessment, program evaluation, curriculum, health requirements, dress codes, language being spoken, and other means of communication and parent involvement practices should be viewed for institutional bias. They may be obvious and intentional, or they may be subtle and unintended. Wherever they exist or whatever the intent, they are harmful and unacceptable. Multicultural programming requires that staff, parents, and the community examine, challenge, and work to eliminate institutional biases.

Children also must be given skills to deal with bias. Appropriate or effective multicultural programming directly addresses issues of bias and stereotypes by enabling children to stand up for themselves and others when confronted with biased situations. Children's critical thinking skills must be enhanced by providing them opportunities to develop concepts of fairness and empathy. Bias and discriminating behaviors will not go away if ignored; children infer tacit acceptance of behaviors which are ignored. Therefore, an active and integrative approach must be incorporated into all aspects of programming because we want children to grow up armed with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills for

living in a complex, diverse world in a socially competent manner.

10. CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND DIVERSE PROGRAMMING AND PRACTICES ARE INCORPORATED IN ALL COMPONENTS AND SERVICES.

Multicultural programming may have been limited in the past to the education component. Head Start is a comprehensive program, however, and all components provide services to and impact on children and families. Cultural differences, stereotypes, and biases can be found in all components. To achieve Head Start goals and maximize child and family development, these principles must not be limited to the education component but must be applied to all aspects of the program.

CONCLUSION

Appropriate multicultural programming is imperative in order to fully achieve Head Start goals. It requires scrutinizing all aspects of program operations and self-examination by program staff. It also requires coordinating with community organizations, schools, other public/private agencies, and institutions with similar needs and goals. In many instances the implementation of these principles will require leadership, courage, change, risk-taking, training, and resources. Implementing Head Start programs which incorporate a multicultural perspective throughout all components and services

can be accomplished by commitment, support, and leadership of Head Start grantees and the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families both nationally and regionally. Finally, as we celebrate diversity, Head Start children will grow more competent and be able to accept the commonalities and differences in people. The result will be long lasting and valuable for all of us who will live in tomorrow's global village.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1991 O - 284-634